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Liberalism and the democratic peace

JOHN MACMILLAN*

Abstract. Recent trends in Democratic Peace theory have called into question the orthodox 'separate democratic peace' position that liberal states are peace-prone only in relations with other liberal states. This article seeks to recast the bases and scope (or parameters) of the relationship between liberalism – primarily left-liberalism – in domestic politics and peace-proneness in foreign affairs, to the effect that whilst this is manifest more broadly than conventionally understood, it is far from universal or undifferentiated. Whilst liberal 'norms' – as indicators of the legitimacy of force – are an important factor in determining when liberals will and will not support the use of force, liberals are also shown to have a higher threshold for the use of force than other groups on the mainstream domestic political spectrum (usually to the Right), indicating greater unwillingness to use force. The cases examined are reasonably neutral, not cherry-picked, in that they are drawn from the three major conflicts of the twentieth century and, as a starting point for the examination of liberal imperialism, Gladstone's Second Ministry (1880–1885).

Whilst the above findings are presented as highly significant for understanding the character of liberal peace-proneness and an advance on the separate democratic peace position, the argument is necessarily qualified in an effort to reflect the political complexities of the phenomenon and the limitations of liberal norms as an explanatory factor. It is, however, these very qualifications that put the politics back into the research agenda and connect the knowledge claims to a wider body of academic scrutiny which, ultimately, should lead to a fuller understanding of the relationship between liberalism, democracy and peace.

Until recently the (near) consensus in Democratic Peace scholarship was that liberal states were remarkably peaceful in, but *only* in, relations with other liberal states. In relations with nonliberal states, liberal states were thought to be as (or even more) war-prone than other types of state. Of late, however, this position has been increasingly challenged by claims that liberal state peace-proneness is actually more extensive than previously thought. Indeed, in the light of this shift two leading scholars have identified the 'big question' facing the research agenda as being whether liberal states are more peaceful in general than other types of state.[1] This

* Part of this article was written whilst the author was a Research Fellow at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, Oslo. The author would like to thank participants in a research seminar at the Institute and also John Horton, Dan Keohane, and, especially, Bruce Russett for comments on an earlier version of this article. The usual caveat applies.

[1] Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 49; see also Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise' *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41:2 (1997), pp. 59–91; Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, 'From Democratic Peace to Kantian Peace: Democracy and Conflict in the International System', in Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies II* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2000), pp. 92–128; John MacMillan, 'Beyond the Separate Democratic Peace', *Journal of Peace Research*, 40:2 (2003), pp. 233–43. This last article provides a critical context for the argument developed here.

turn remains controversial, however, and is theoretically and empirically underdeveloped. For one thing, such a shift requires rethinking the theoretical bases of the democratic peace and provision of greater guidance as to the circumstances in which liberal states do and don't use force – or to put this differently: the extent and parameters of liberal state peace-proneness.[2]

I discuss below the contribution 'liberalism' makes to these questions, in particular through its influence upon perceptions of the legitimacy of the use of force. Liberalism is a political-philosophical project centrally concerned with the way in which individuals in political communities are able to maximise their freedom without violating the rights of other individuals (and communities) to do the same. Liberalism, broadly understood, pervades positions across the democratic political spectrum. Nevertheless, in the interests of theoretical parsimony it is the left-liberal strand that this discussion primarily focuses upon. Whilst different left-liberal groupings have their distinct characteristics and need to be analysed ultimately on a case-by-case basis, in general terms this strand is characterised theoretically by factoring a concern with the implications of property rights for social justice into the broader liberal and democratic investigation into the conditions of freedom, and is manifest politically in left-liberal, social-democratic, and parliamentary socialist parties.

I argue below that liberalism is more peace-prone than acknowledged by the orthodox 'separate' democratic peace position and that liberalism tends to exert a restraining influence upon the use of force by states. At the same time, however, liberalism is not generally or universally peace-prone and may legitimate and in certain circumstances even commission the use of force by states. I argue that fundamental in determining whether liberals will or will not support the use of force is the perceived legitimacy of the action in terms of liberal principles and values, operational in terms of liberal norms. In order to enable the testing of these claims I offer two hypotheses designed to measure the willingness of liberals to use force and the circumstances in which they will do so. I then discuss a number of reasonably neutral historical cases in order to provide *prima facie* support for the argument.

Several recent theoretical contributions to the democratic peace debate have applied a range of rational choice, game-theoretic and statistical methods to argue that certain features of the institutional structure of states are the key determinants of foreign policy.[3] These studies have turned away from emphasising the contribu-

[2] To clarify, I follow the common usage of the term war as 'large-scale institutionally organized lethal violence', see Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 12. The discussion is concerned primarily with those uses of force that correspond with 'war' but in principle the analysis could extend to lower levels of militarised conflict subject to empirical analysis. 'Peace-prone' refers to the inclination or 'will' to peace whilst 'peaceful' has the rather different meaning of having attained the state of peace. Recent studies have highlighted the distinction between a state (or actor) having peaceful intentions (as a monadic characteristic) and effecting peaceful outcomes (often thought of as the product of the interactions between two or more states); see Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, *Elections and War: The Electoral Incentive in the Democratic Politics of War and Peace* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999) and Kenneth Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). To be clear this article focuses principally upon peace-proneness: the preference or 'will' for peace. However, as some of the case studies below indicate, this is at times sufficient to deliver peaceful outcomes.

[3] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James Morrow, Randolph Siverson, and Alastair Smith, 'An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace', *American Political Science Review*, 93:4 (1999), pp. 791–807; Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (fn. 2); Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies At War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

tion of liberalism and some have specifically criticised the use of 'norms'-based theoretical approaches. Given this, why another theoretical paper, and what's new about the way in which liberalism and norms are used here?

Recent work[4] by Schultz stresses the importance of open political competition – and in particular whether the government does or does not have the support of the opposition party – for determining whether a democracy will make threats in international crises. Schultz analyses the behaviour of the governing and opposition parties primarily in terms of electoral reward.[5] My argument focuses upon liberal actors – generally political parties – engaged in realising a liberal political project. A working assumption is that the policy positions such parties take are influenced by the perceived legitimacy of the case in hand, in terms of liberal political principles and values. I do not claim that this is the only factor influencing the political behaviour of politicians or parties – winning and retaining office is clearly central – but that their strategies in achieving this are shaped and constrained by liberal principles and values. Indeed, the argument is reinforced by an existing body of literature contending that liberal/socialist values and principles are essential for understanding underlying patterns of why 'liberal' parties in a range of national contexts are more peace-prone than their contemporaries to the Right.[6] Attention to the role of liberalism in *commissioning* the use of force is important here for it addresses Schultz's attempt to strip parties of any inherent ideological attachment to a specific stance or position, in this instance upon the use of force. Schultz argues that if this were the case, certain political parties would be consistently and uniformly peace-prone.[7] I show below that liberalism's peace-proneness is norm-dependent and hence will be manifest broadly in accordance with the constraining and commissioning power of such norms and not as a universally pacific influence.

Reiter and Stam focus upon the importance of 'public consent' to explain when democracies do and don't start wars. Whilst they do identify either a 'narrow' or a 'broad' definition of the national interest as 'the central factor determining whether a public will consent to war',[8] this point is under-theorised as they overlook the way in which internalised political-philosophical assumptions about politics and international relations shape the way in which national interest is perceived. The cases and examples offered below illustrate how this plays out in policy terms in attitudes towards isolationism and internationalism, national honour, humanitarianism, the rights of peoples and how they connect with questions of the use of force. Both Schultz and Reiter and Stam make valuable contributions to the debate and address a wider range of issues than does this article. Nevertheless, there is an important point at stake here, as their institutional explanations risk slipping the

[4] Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*'s contribution (fn. 3) has been discussed by MacMillan, 'Beyond the Separate Democratic Peace' (fn. 1).
[5] Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (fn. 2), p. 79.
[6] Shlomo Avineri, 'Ideology and Israel's foreign policy', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 37 (1986); John MacMillan, *On Liberal Peace: Democracy, War and the International Order* (London: Tauris, 1998); Dan Keohane, *Security in British Politics, 1945–99* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); see also Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 110–118.
[7] Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy* (fn. 2), p. 115.
[8] Reiter and Stam, *Democracies At War* (fn. 3), p. 148.

moral anchor and losing the critical spirit that ultimately underpins whatever relationship there may be between democracy and peace.

What's 'new' with regard to the use of liberalism is principally the interpretation of its political legacy for the relationship between democracy, peace and war. Proponents of the predominant 'separate peace' variant of the democratic peace such as Doyle and Owen[9] have argued that liberalism restricts the peace-proneness of a liberal state to relations with other liberal states. This interpretation is problematic, however, for as I show below both theoretically and empirically one finds liberal peace-proneness extending beyond only relations with other liberal states. This difference aside, I share with Owen the basic method of ascertaining the influence of liberalism upon state foreign policy. This is to seek to identify and trace the influence of liberalism through analysis of the foreign policy statements and behaviour of liberal political actors and opinion-formers such as politicians, and political parties and their societal support bases in the media and public opinion.

Norms are here understood as moral or regulative standards that legitimate or delegitimate certain behaviour. Separate peace scholars have focused exclusively on the liberal norm of respect and toleration for fellow liberals as a way of delimiting liberal peacefulness to relations with other liberal states. Criticisms of this norm-based approach by scholars such as Bueno de Mesquita *et al*. and Reiter and Stam have focused primarily on two main points: the seemingly *ad hoc* usage of norms and the record of liberal state use of force (particularly imperialism) against weaker states that purportedly violates liberal pacific norms. 'The presence and substance of norms' in democratic peace theory, argue Bueno de Mesquita *et al*., 'are established solely by reference to the outcomes of conflict between democratic states. . . . In order to qualify as an explanation of the observation, however, that assertion must be derived independently of the observation, either from prior axioms or from unrelated empirical evidence.'[10] This is a valid point, for theorists *have* been selective in their use of norms, seemingly highlighting those that fit the particular empirical phenomena being explained, rather than deducing a full range of norms from the liberal political tradition and then analysing whether they are in practice consequential. I identify and briefly discuss such a range of liberal norms below but concentrate discussion upon the most fundamental for the question of the extent of liberal state peace-proneness: that against 'aggression', or the pursuit of state self-interest through the offensive use of force.

The importance of identifying here a *range* of norms is primarily theoretical: to provide criteria through which to differentiate those circumstances in which liberals will and will not support the use of force. In turn, although the situation is complicated by intervening variables and dependent upon the strength of liberalism within the state, these norms should serve as an indicator of when liberal *states* will and will not go to war.

Bueno de Mesquita *et al*. (and others') second main criticism of norms is that the historical record of imperialism and wars of subjugation by liberal states invalidates

[9] Michael W. Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs, part I', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12:3 (1983); John M. Owen, 'How Liberalism Produces Peace', *International Security* 19:2 (1994); Owen, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War: American Politics and International Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[10] Bueno de Mesquita et al., 'Explanation of the Democratic Peace' (fn. 3), 792.

norm-based explanation of the violence of liberal states. 'It may be correct to argue', they write, 'that democratic states resort to realist strategies in the face of a powerful nondemocratic opponent who threatens their existence, but too many democratic wars have been against significantly weaker states for this argument to be sustained as an explanation for the democratic peace'.[11] This point is important, but care must be taken not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Critical is analysis that opens up the 'black box' of the liberal state in order to establish the role of liberalism and liberal actors in such violence. I address this below through introducing greater sensitivity into the analysis of liberal state imperialism and to the question of norm change over time as evidence of liberalism's own reflectivity upon the legitimacy of its practices. The argument now turns to elaborate upon liberalism and its legacy for the war/peace proneness of liberal states, drawing in particular upon the recent work of John Rawls.

Liberalism, Rawls, norms and the use of force

There are two good reasons to regard John Rawls' *The Law of Peoples* (1999) as a valuable starting position from which to think about the implications of liberalism for both the peace-proneness and the use of force by liberal states. The first is that Rawls, himself widely regarded as the most important contemporary theorist of rights-based liberalism, follows explicitly in the tradition of Immanuel Kant, who is the philosopher drawn upon most widely by Democratic Peace theorists. Second, and more importantly, Rawls engages directly with the question of democratic peace and provides a philosophically grounded argument with impeccable liberal credentials.

Rawls follows Kant's concern with the relations between political communities, but identifies his subject as 'peoples' rather than 'states'. This move enables him to attribute to political communities moral motives derived directly from liberalism, as distinct from the 'morality of states' derived from concepts of sovereignty and the instrumental rationality of *raison d'etat*,[12] thereby proffering a methodological 'ideal type' through which to discern the influence of liberalism. The law of peoples denies to states both the traditional rights to war in pursuit of a state's rational prudential interests and the unrestricted internal autonomy from the population of that state associated with the Westphalian system. Rather, Rawls' system of law is designed as a model for political communities that have reasonably just, or decent, regimes and whose moral nature has led them to offer reasonable and fair terms of cooperation to other peoples.

What, however, does Rawls understand by a 'liberal people' and a liberal society? The first of three basic features of a liberal people are a 'reasonably just constitutional government that serves their fundamental interests'; the second that 'citizens [are] united by what Mill called "common sympathies" '; and the third 'a moral nature'. A liberal society is one that strikes the right balance between liberty and

[11] Ibid.; see also Reiter and Stam, *Democracies At War* (fn. 3), pp. 149–51.
[12] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 25–30.

equality through giving priority to basic rights, liberties and opportunities but also by assuring that citizens have the means to 'make intelligent and effective use of their freedoms'. This, in turn, requires government to pursue a number of social or redistributive objectives to prevent unreasonable inequalities. The five Rawls identifies are equality of opportunity, a decent distribution of income, provision of employment opportunities, basic health care for all citizens; and public financial and informational support for the electoral process.[13]

Rawls' *Law of Peoples* adds value to the democratic peace debate in at least three respects. Firstly, Rawls displays a rich comprehension of the way in which liberal political philosophers have placed 'justice' at the centre of analysis of the general war/peace proneness of states and, secondly, have regarded justice as integral to the legitimacy of specific wars. Thirdly, there is a striking disjuncture between Rawls' representation of the bases of liberal state peace-proneness and that typically manifest in separate democratic peace theory.

Firstly then, Rawls, in the vein of writers such as Kant, Green, Hobhouse and others, regards the liberal state as an evolutionary and purposive moral and political community in which the impetus to war is a function of an as yet imperfectly developed or unjust political order. Conversely, the essence of making states less warlike and establishing a stable and long-lasting peace is the (further) development of just political institutions and arrangements.

In contradistinction to the separate peace position, however, one should not infer from this that liberal-nonliberal state relations must necessarily be characterised by mistrust or war. Rawls does identify two realms for liberal theory: the ideal and the nonideal;[14] but these do not correspond to the liberal-nonliberal axis of separate peace theory and, importantly, are determined by the *behaviour* as well as the *régime-type* of actors. Ideal theory is designed to apply principally to relations between well-ordered societies, a category that includes decent hierarchical nonliberal peoples as well as liberal peoples. A decent hierarchical nonliberal people is one that has 'a common good idea of justice that assigns human rights to all its members; its basic structure includes a decent consultation hierarchy that protects these and other rights and ensures that all groups in society are decently represented by elected bodies in the system of consultation'. His fictional example is 'Kazanistan'. Rawls expects such societies to subscribe to the law of nations, not to be aggressive, and to be at peace with each other. Liberals do not have the right to seek to 'convert' these peoples to liberalism and are obliged to tolerate them, in the positive sense of being 'equal participating members in good standing of the Society of Peoples'.[15]

Attention to the *behaviour* of liberal peoples as a criterion for being in good standing in the society of peoples is important in providing a standard by which to hold liberal states themselves to account for their actions, something the exclusively regime-based analysis of most democratic peace theory omits. Hence Rawls, for example, cautions that a liberal society 'cannot justly require its citizens to fight in

[13] Ibid. (fn. 12), pp. 49–50.

[14] The realm of nonideal theory applies to relations between liberal and non-well ordered peoples. Non-well ordered peoples are subdivided into a number of subcategories including burdened societies, benevolent despotisms, and outlaw states. Liberal peoples hold different obligations towards each group

[15] Rawls, *Law of Peoples* (fn. 12), pp. 94, 59.

order to gain economic wealth or to acquire natural resources, much less to win power and empire'. Indeed, 'when a society pursues these interests, it no longer honours the Law of Peoples, and it becomes an outlaw state'.[16]

This leads to the second point, which is that justice, being integral to the legitimate grounds for war, constrains liberal peoples in the use of force against non-liberal (and non-well ordered) peoples as well as in relations with other liberal peoples. Rawls shares with liberals (and Democratic Peace theory) the view that war between liberal states is unlikely.[17] However, and reflecting much actual liberal and socialist debate upon war, he also points toward the normative constraints liberals impose upon war or the use of force *per se*, that is against states regardless of regime type. Hence he contends that 'to the extent that each of the liberal societies fully satisfies the conditions described [above], all are less likely to engage in war with nonliberal outlaw states, except on grounds of legitimate self-defence (or in the defence of their legitimate allies), or intervention in severe cases to protect human rights'.[18]

The third point is the disjuncture between Rawls' and separate Democratic Peace theory's representation of the bases of liberal state peace-proneness. Rawls echoes the arguments of a long line of liberals that have criticised war and preparation for war as fundamentally antipathetic to and corrosive of the moral and political evolution of liberal political community. War and preparation for war, militarism and imperialism distort domestic political priorities, strengthen the executive relative to the legislature, foster and enhance the status of elites and other groups who may not share a liberal ethos and which may drag the society into unnecessary and misguided conflicts. These arguments fit neatly with the recent monadic turn in democratic peace scholarship[19] and lead one to expect that liberals should exercise restraint when contemplating war or the use of force *regardless* of the regime type of the adversary.

Rawls' recent work is, then, useful for drawing out certain core themes in the liberal tradition of thought upon peace, war and the use of force that have been neglected or suppressed in democratic peace scholarship. I want now to elaborate upon these and develop two testable hypotheses.

Hypothesising liberal war/peace proneness

Clear is that if one is to take the debate beyond (easily falsifiable) claims of a general or undifferentiated peace-proneness one must identify criteria for differentiating those circumstances in which liberal states do and do not use force. Hence:

- *Hypothesis 1*. Liberals will support (or protest against) war in accordance with the extent to which they regard such action as legitimate (or illegitimate) in terms of norms of 'justice of war' and 'justice in war' derived directly from liberal principles and values.

[16] Ibid. (fn. 12), p. 91.
[17] Ibid. (fn. 12), p. 49.
[18] Ibid. (fn. 12), p. 49.
[19] See MacMillan, 'Beyond the Separate Democratic Peace' (fn. 1).

Sourcing norms in this manner should overcome Bueno de Mesquita's criticism of the '*ad hoc*' usage of norms. The list below draws in part directly, and in part elaborates upon, Rawls' list of liberal norms pertaining to the legitimacy of war and the use of force. Historically, the major constraints have been derived from liberalism's critique of the Westphalian system of sovereign states. Within the Westphalian system war is conventionally regarded as a legitimate instrument of state foreign policy (under the doctrine of *raison d'état*) and the ultimate regulator of the balance of power, through which the state system is itself preserved. It is in the context of this tradition of critique that Rawls asserts that 'no state has a right to war in the pursuit of its *rational*, as opposed to its *reasonable*, interests'.[20]

One can draw out two further secondary norms from this critique of the morality of the Westphalian system. That liberalism has sought to develop constitutional/institutional machinery to constrain and hold to account the executive is indicative of the residual tension between state and civil society (or 'states' and 'peoples'). That is to say, part of liberalism's political legacy has been to devise constitutional/institutional and regulatory mechanisms through which to create, sustain and protect a realm of societal space independent from the state. Accordingly, liberals tend to be suspicious about state motives for war (as war is the principal means through which the state has increased its control over society), and to judge its legitimacy by standards external to *raison d'état* or state interest. As such, liberals are particularly suspicious of the 'unilateral' use of force by states (in inverse relation to the extent the *casus bellum* is perceived as legitimate). The inability of a state to find legal and moral authority external to the state itself, such as from the United Nations, its predecessor the League or (to a much lesser extent) the Concert of Europe, raises questions about the motives and legitimacy of the action. Failing authorisation from such an international body, support from fellow liberal or decent peoples may substitute, but failure to gain either signals questions over the legitimacy of the action. Secondly, in terms of the balance of power, Schweller has argued that liberals have regarded the notion of 'preventive war' illegitimate in theory and have refrained from it in practice.[21] Further, one also notes the norm pertaining to *jus in bellum* against harming civilians on the grounds that the population cannot be regarded as the author of the enemy government's aggressive actions.[22]

However, and strangely overlooked in most democratic peace theory, liberalism also generates norms that *commission* rather than *constrain* states in the use of force. Largely uncontroversial, for example, is the claim that liberals have the right to war in self-defence in order to 'protect and preserve the basic freedoms of its citizens and its constitutionally democratic political institutions'.[23] Rawls notes also the right of liberal and decent peoples to defend their legitimate allies, from which one might infer support for some form of collective defence or even collective security. More

[20] Rawls, *Law of Peoples* (fn. 12), p. 91.
[21] Randolph Schweller, 'Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific? *World Politics*, 44:2 (1992).
[22] Rawls, *Law of Peoples* (fn. 12); Ward Thomas, *The Ethics of Destruction: Norms and Force in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
[23] Rawls, *Law of Peoples* (fn. 12), p. 91.

controversial, in terms of the Westphalian system, is the right to go to war to halt 'egregious' violations of human rights if the violators failed to respond to non-military sanctions.

What this list of liberal norms indicates is a general restraining influence upon the use of force which derives from liberalism's ideological repugnance towards the way in which the Westphalian system institutionalised and legitimated war. At the same time, however, the reformist element of liberalism's character is also evident, rooted in the belief that the world should and could develop from the realm of 'anarchy' to the realm of 'law'. These twin features endow liberalism with a dual disposition towards the use of force marked by both 'restraint' and 'reform'. Whilst 'restraint' may be the stronger of the two forces, there is nevertheless a residual tension that may induce liberals to support the use of force for international reformist purposes (in keeping with the normative framework outlined above). When the use of force is offensive, one has the liberal 'crusade'. Kosovo presents a recent example of a liberal crusade, but liberal rationales for imperialism are historically the most significant instances.

The second hypothesis is directly concerned with the 'restraint' claim, developed to test for the willingness of liberal actors to use force. Formulating such a hypothesis is not, however, straightforward. Testable hypotheses should be sufficiently sensitive to discern whether the independent variable – liberalism – affects the war and peace-proneness of liberal states, but at the same time is sufficiently focused to be capable of filtering out the influence of other factors – or 'noise' – generated by the domestic and international environments in which liberalism operates. At the domestic level such factors might include bureaucratic, corporate and military interests that can distort or override liberalism. Professional politicians will consider numerous intervening variables such as the relative political positioning of a party's policy, the calls for party discipline, the rally-round-the-flag effect and the electoral cycle upon policymaking. Internationally, strategic interaction behaviour may raise the military risks and political costs of being perceived as *too* keen to preserve peace or end a war. These domestic and international factors combine to exert complex 'push and pulls' on government during time of crisis, yet nevertheless make up the natural (if complicating) environment in which decisions are made. Ultimately, a theory of the relationship between liberal states and war/peace-proneness will integrate the contribution of liberalism with other relevant factors. At this stage of the research agenda, however, demonstrating that liberalism is consequential for the war/peace proneness of liberal states (or democracies), and that this is rooted in the nature of the liberal political project, should be regarded as progressive.

Accordingly, the hypothesis below is designed to test for the willingness of liberals to go to war or use force relative to nonliberal or 'less' liberal political actors within the liberal state. I do this through comparing the '*force-thresholds*' of liberals with other actors on the domestic political spectrum. Hence:

- *Hypothesis 2*. Liberals will have a higher threshold for the use of force than other actors on the mainstream political spectrum (with the possible exception of those instances when liberal norms may commission the use of force such as collective security operations or responses to mass human rights violations).

The hypothesis' key limitations are that it measures for willingness to use force *relative* to other positions on the domestic political spectrum rather than against external criteria, such as, for example, an unwillingness to escalate crises, demonstrable exhaustion of non-military channels, or a commitment to use force *only* under the auspices of an international authority. On the other hand, the complex *politics* of war and peace (just discussed) may introduce such high levels of 'noise' into the process that such alternative tests are insufficiently sensitive to the influence of liberalism itself. Indeed, the *relative* standard used here has the strength of providing analysis that comes as close as one probably can to control for political context and isolate the influence of liberalism/socialism, albeit with the exception of behavioural differences due to whether one is in government or in opposition. The second major weakness of this test – but one that applies to democratic peace scholarship in general – is that it is not geared towards analysing liberalism's relationship with such deep structural and cultural practices as capitalism, geopolitics, militarism or imperialism that can be prevalent in a democracy and may be responsible for generating the circumstances or crises that liberal political actors are required to address. I return to this point when discussing the case of Egypt below.

Other merits of this approach, however, are that the test is in principle *sufficient* to establish whether liberalism restrains states in the use of force; contributes to understanding the extent of liberal peace-proneness, that is, to whether it is applicable to relations with nonliberal as well as other liberal states; and contributes to knowledge-building for future research on the respective importance of 'preferences' and 'international interactions' or 'outcomes'.

Finally, which are the appropriate cases to examine? Given that one cannot here consider every case of liberal war or crisis involvement, one has to be selective and choose cases that are both relevant and rich whilst also seeking to guard against bias, which is done through applying neutral selection criteria. Accordingly, I have chosen key cases found in each of the three major conflicts of the twentieth century: the German Social Democrats in the case of the First World War; the security policy of the British Labour Party in the 1930s prior to the Second World War; and the position of American liberals with regard to the emergence of the Cold War in general and the Korean War in particular. In the case of colonial or imperial conflict I discuss the record of the most famous British liberal Prime Minister, William Gladstone. These, then, are not cherry-picked but reasonably neutral cases.

Liberal norms and force-thresholds as a framework for analysing state war/peace proneness

World War I

The German Social Democrats in Wilhelmine Germany were in many respects the equivalents of the British liberal-left, for as Clarke noted, 'much of the work that socialism stood for in continental Europe was the work of liberalism in England'.[24]

[24] P. F. Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 152.

Indeed, the growing affinity between liberal and socialist internationalism in this period is apparent in the widespread defection of left-liberals into the Labour Party which, in Leonard Woolf's words, 'inherited its foreign policy from Cobden and Bright through Gladstone liberalism'.[25] That only 14 German Social Democrat Deputies voted against war credits in a Party meeting on 3 August 1914 contrasts sharply with the pacifism they were professing but days earlier and would seem to challenge the arguments of this article. However, whilst a number of factors extraneous to liberalism were influential, the underlying behavioural trend clearly illustrates (a) the contingency of Social Democrat support for the war on its perceived legitimacy and (b) their relative peace-proneness compared to other actors on the German domestic political spectrum.

Initially the German government pursued a policy of reassurance and cajolery to ensure Social Democrat support for the war. Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg assured them that the war was not a war of conquest but defensive in character, promising even to restore the integrity of Belgium. The initial movement for peace among the Social Democrats had been stunned by the announcement of Russian mobilisation and the spread of rumours on 2 August that Russian patrols had crossed into German territory. Historically the Russian Question had been a persistent strain on the unity of liberalism in Germany and acted now to disarm resistance to this 'defensive' war. Added to this were important political calculations: if the Social Democrats refused their support and Germany lost the war they feared an electoral and popular backlash. On the other hand, if they refused to support the war and Germany won, they would have sacrificed their seat at the postwar political bargaining table. In this situation, then, one finds normative constraints disarmed by the power of the state to define and manipulate the normative context, fear of a backlash among public opinion and instrumental calculations of political interest.

The test for liberal norms soon came, however, as German military successes early in 1915 fed a wave of annexationist sentiment leading Bethmann Hollweg to publicly support annexations. Annexations were intimately bound up with the question of the nature of the war and it was this issue more than any other that fractured the Party along Left-Right lines. Almost immediately the Extreme Left minority group of Social Democrats broke with the *Burgfrieden*, in protest at the evidently imperialist character of the war. Left-Centrists such as Bernstein, Haase and Kautsky began to campaign against annexations and for a peace of understanding and by December 1915 twenty on the Left of the Party were voting against war credits. Indeed, given the policy of twenty-two others to leave the Chamber before the vote in accordance with official Party policy (set increasingly by the Right of the Party), one can equally say that forty-four refused to vote for war credits, marking a 2:3 ratio within the Party. Those to the Right in the Party, led by the majority leader Scheidemann, did lend some support to annexations but their claims were moderate compared to those further to the Right on the broader political spectrum. As Schorske notes, 'where the Social Democrat opposition altered their position on the war in the light of the aims for which it was fought, Bethmann changed his ideas of

[25] Quoted in Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 84.

war aims in the light of the progress of the war'.[26] The differences in attitudes toward peace among the German parties became even more starkly drawn in 1916 as the liberal-left argued for a peace of understanding whilst the German Conservatives and National Liberals pressed for unrestricted submarine warfare.

British security policy in the 1930s

In the interwar period the interplay between 'restraint' and 'reform' was manifest in the foreign policies of the British Labour and Liberal Parties in the tension between 'pacifism' and 'collective security'. Whilst both parties advocated disarmament in the 1920s, from the Sino-Japanese Crisis of 1931 and the 1935 Italo-Abyssinian Crisis in particular they increasingly turned towards the doctrine of collective security under the auspices of the League of Nations. Within the Labour Party the tension between pacifism and collective security came to a head at the Brighton Conference of September 1935, in the midst of the Italo-Abyssinian Crisis. Dalton's motion in favour of collective security was passed by 95 per cent of the delegates against the objections of Cripps, Ponsonby, and party leader Lansbury in a debate that 'exorciz[ed] purely pacifist doctrines from official Labour leadership, as well as from policy, for the balance of the decade'.[27]

In contrast, the Conservative Party was divided between wholesale appeasers such as Neville Chamberlain, those such as Churchill who pursued the tactical appeasement of Mussolini in the hope of having him fight with Britain against Hitler, and those such as Eden who doubted the wisdom of appeasement *per se*. Socialists and liberals frequently argued that failure to resist aggression would further encourage the transgressors and embolden others. Indeed, Labour was to become increasingly and correctly aware of a lamentable 'learning curve' amongst the dictators: 'each successful act of aggression', remonstrated Attlee in March 1938, 'leads to another . . . Manchuria, Rhineland, Abyssinia, Spain, China, Austria – what next? In this progressive deterioration of the world situation there must come a time when it is necessary to stand firm unless all Europe is to be thrown into the melting pot.'[28] Labour made the argument that collective security was primarily a preventive rather than a punitive doctrine, as demonstrating a commitment to international law would deter those planning aggression.

The experience of the 1930s, then, burned upon liberals the need for a committed and if necessary muscular defence of the international order, and in particular the principle that force – or aggression – ought to be resisted. In Chamberlain, liberals saw that conciliation without law enforcement encouraged adventurism. The danger,

[26] Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 304; Edwyn Bevan, *German Social Democracy During the War* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918), pp. 71–3.

[27] John F. Naylor, *Labour's International Policy: The Labour Party in the 1930s* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 110; Richard S. Grayson, *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement: The Liberal Party, 1919–1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), pp. 115–120, 123, 127, 136–9.

[28] Naylor, *Labour Party in the 1930s* (fn. 24), p. 225, also pp. 130, 134, 208.

however, was that law enforcement without conciliation would be the veil that covered a reactionary international order unable to accommodate the natural pressures for change that arise. Hence following Hitler's accession to the Chancellorship in 1933 liberals were caught in the dilemma that whilst one didn't want to grant Hitler what was denied Stressemann, the fact that Germany still possessed legitimate claims in Europe had not changed.

Thus, whereas Labour had been clear in their protestation against Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, the normative context and a residual guilt over Versailles led them to acquiesce in response to Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland. Dalton drew a 'clear distinction between the action of Signor Mussolini in resorting to aggressive war and waging it beyond his frontiers, and the actions, up-to-date at any rate, of Herr Hitler which, much as we regard them as reprehensible, have taken place within the frontiers of the German Reich'. At the same time, however, he did seek to 'draw the line' for the German people by warning them against pursuing 'overbearing and brutal predominance in the world'.[29] One finds here, one of the residual liberal dilemmas of how to respond to non-liberal nationalists (or Communists or fundamentalists) who may themselves be willing to use force in pursuit of their claims, but who nevertheless have a political case rooted in historic or contemporary injustice. Whilst the widely drawn liberal lesson of the 1930s was to nip aggressive dictators in the bud, the experience of Suez in the 1950s, Vietnam in the 1960s and Nicaragua in the 1980s shows that liberal states may misinterpret or overreact to nationalist struggles, and create enormous political difficulties for themselves in the pursuit of normatively illegitimate or dubious force.

If for the sake of argument one regards Conservative policy as being the wholesale appeasement conducted by Prime Minister Chamberlain, then threshold analysis alone indicates that it was the *Conservatives* who were more peace-prone than the Socialists or Liberals. It is precisely this sort of case, however, that requires evaluation in terms of norms as well as thresholds so as to avoid the over-simplified view that war involvement (or willingness to use force) *per se* nullifies claims of a liberal peace-proneness that is broader than that identified by the separate peace variant of democratic peace theory. In this case, the liberal claim that collective security was a policy that could *maintain* peace is strengthened by Chamberlain's clear misjudgement of the possibility of peace short of Hitler's continental domination. The liberals' turn to collective security measures *was* a case of the reformist use of force, but reluctantly and defensively so.

The emergence of the United States Cold War consensus and force-thresholds in Korea

The left-right distinction is not as clear-cut in the case of the American political parties in the 1940s and 1950s as in the German and British cases. Both parties had factions that were unambiguously liberal: the New Dealers and the Progressives in the Democrat party and the (*laissez-faire*) Taftites of the Republican party, and both

[29] Ibid. (fn. 24), pp. 132–3.

parties also had factions less attached to liberalism such as the Southern Democrats and big business conservative republicans. Nevertheless, the interplay between restraint and reform is apparent in the politics of both parties as the two strands of liberalism reluctantly came to support mobilisation for what was to become the Cold War. However, after the outbreak of the Korean War the 'restraint-reform' disposition is challenged as liberalism transmorphed to support the offensive use of force in Korea in a clear case of liberal crusading. This said, force-threshold analysis demonstrates the greater willingness of left-liberals to pursue peace than their political peers to the Right – if not necessarily their ability to attain it.

Following the Second World War, liberals within the Democratic Party tended to fall into two groups. Those characterised broadly as anti-communists effectively formed the left-wing of Truman's foreign policy, even if many regarded Truman himself with some disdain, and those characterised broadly as non-communists (or progressives) looked to Henry Wallace and maintained adherence to the wartime notion of an anti-fascist Popular Front. Liberals in this period pursued a dual-track policy: seeking both to fathom whether the Soviet Union was receptive to co-operative measures and to prevent their own government, and particularly business and military interests, doing anything that would undermine the possibility of US-Soviet cooperation.

Surveying the postwar world, progressives saw the emerging conflict as one principally between rival British and Soviet imperialisms, which prevented them from professing *special* indignation toward the Soviet Union. Indeed, most liberals could accept Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, so long as the Eastern European nations retained some measure of independence.[30] The lack of urgency or sense of security danger is reflected in the response to Truman's request to Congress for military aid to Greece and Turkey in March 1947. The non-communist liberals were positively hostile to the request whilst the anti-communist liberals offered only qualified support, expressing concern over the apparent militarisation of foreign policy and practice of support for non-democratic governments.[31] The single most significant factor that changed attitudes was the Soviet overthrow of a functioning democracy in 1948, the Czech coup serving 'as a traumatic revelation of Soviet implacability'.[32] The moral clarity of the Czech coup, in contrast to perceptions of the earlier extension of Soviet influence in the region,[33] dispelled liberal hopes of a political *modus vivendi* with the Soviets. However, even after the Czech coup there remained a strong preference amongst liberals to contain Soviet ambitions through constructive political and economic means rather than through the greater militarisation of foreign policy.

The Cold War case is then – at least so far – consistent with and supportive of the claim that liberal peace-proneness extends beyond the inter-liberal realm. It was not

[30] Alonzo Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 94, 98.

[31] Clifton Brock, Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Politics (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1962), pp. 63–5; *Nation*, 5 April 1947, p. 383; see also Paul G. Pierpaoli Jr., *Truman and Korea: The Political Culture of the Early Cold War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999), p. 8.

[32] Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal* (fn. 30), p. 506; *Nation*, 28 February 1948.

[33] Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal* (fn. 30), p. 179.

the Soviet regime itself but the regime's behaviour that led liberals to discount the prospects of a political accommodation, and even then concerns over the militarisation of foreign policy remained.

The Taftites, the only group of Right-liberals[34] considered in this essay, strongly protested the internationalist turn in American foreign policy largely on liberal isolationist grounds. Involvement in the 'Old World' was politically highly undesirable in itself, but also carried with it the threat to liberty at home through increasing the power of the legislature relative to the executive, militarising public policy, establishing unaccountable concentrations of power, and distorting the economy through higher taxes.

That their position pointed them in two diametrically opposed directions soon came to the fore in the highly partisan debates over Korea. For most Democrats the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950 was normatively fairly clear-cut. Given the consolidation of a Cold War consensus, and Truman's move to secure UN authorisation for what for all liberal intents and purposes was a collective security operation, the war to resist aggression was widely supported. Whilst Republicans blamed Truman first for the war itself (and then for being unable to end it) they couldn't fault the speed of his response to the invasion. However the tension between restraint and reform resurfaced once again, this time in debates over how far and how intensively to prosecute the war, as it turned from a collective security operation into a crusade.

The strong perception of legitimacy, early military successes and the prospect of a total victory led many but not all liberals to support the expansion of war aims to include the removal of the North Korean government and the unification of the peninsula under a programme of democratic land-reform, large-scale economic aid and UN-supervised democratic elections. Given that this is an offensive use of force for liberal purposes – even if one that only became a political possibility *following* the initial North Korean attack – it marks a category shift to an offensive reformist position, or crusade. Indeed, such a position can claim some authority from within the liberal political-philosophical tradition, for Kant himself sanctioned the imposition of a 'republican' constitution on a state *following* its aggression.[35] Given the contemporary occupation and transformation of West Germany and Japan, the new policy in Korea would have seemed to many not only desirable but also practically feasible.

However, China's entry into the war reversed the military successes and greatly raised the political stakes, forcing American political actors to re-evaluate the aims of the war. Whilst the Republicans had initially acquiesced in the concept of limited war, 'many in the party found it impossible to support the policy after the intervention of the Red Chinese' and thought that General MacArthur should have

[34] Whilst the limitations of Taft's pacificism is shown in the case of Korea, there are strands of conservative liberalism represented, for example, by the CATO Institute, that are ideologically committed to pursuit of a peaceful foreign policy as the corollary of support for the free market and minimal state in the tradition of Cobden and Bright and the Manchester School. This strand of contemporary conservative liberalism is, however, politically marginal and hence its policy record difficult to evaluate. I am grateful to Matthew Rendall for the CATO example.

[35] Hans Reiss, (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 170; John MacMillan, 'A Kantian Protest against the Peculiar Discourse of Inter-Liberal State Peace', in Eivind Hovden and Edward Keene (eds.), *The Globalization of Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 66.

the right to strike anywhere.[36] This included supporting MacArthur's calls for a radical expansion of the war to include the bombing of Chinese industrial centres, supply depots and communications networks, and the 'unleashing' of Chiang Kai Shek's forces into the conflict. Taft vacillated between the two policies that followed logically from his fiscal conservative and anti-big state position: total withdrawal or (as he increasingly leant towards) the escalation of the conflict through (more intensive) bombing in order to extricate the republic from the war at minimum cost.

By contrast, most Democrat liberals rejected both a total response and a total withdrawal: an expanded war against China would entail a massive commitment of American resources to an endless war and leave Europe vulnerable to Soviet attack; conceding to aggression on the peninsula would be an intolerable defeat for the West and the UN. 'Within months, progressives who once had hoped for a united, democratic Korea were accepting a stalemated conflict as a moral victory and advocating a truce which would restore the *status quo ante*'.[37] Crusading zeal was attractive to the liberals, as part of a UN collective security action *in response* to North Korean aggression, so long as the price was not too high. That left-liberals retreated from this position, in contradistinction to Republicans and the Taftites, illustrates that left-liberals were the more peace-prone of the groups on the domestic political spectrum. Of course, it has to remain an open question whether a Republican administration would have escalated the conflict in the manner advocated whilst in opposition. But in the highly charged and emotive domestic political context of the early 1950s it is by no means clear that MacArthur would have been denied the war he wanted.[38]

The liberal movement, then, reluctantly engaged in the Cold War, requiring behavioural evidence that a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union was not possible. Whilst the normative rationale for the initial resistance to the North Korean invasion was largely uncontroversial for liberals and accepted by the Taftites, the turn to a crusade exposed clear differences in force-thresholds between left-liberals and those to the Right.

Liberal imperialism

Imperialism and wars of subjugation have been identified by Bueno de Mesquita *et al*. and Reiter and Stam[39] as a key reason for rejecting a norms-based *approach* to

[36] Ronald J. Caridi, *The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), pp. 110, 155–6.

[37] Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal* (fn. 30), pp. 423–4; Caridi, *Korean War* (fn. 36), pp. 164–6; Norman A. Graebner, *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy since 1950* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956), p. 103; John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1959), pp. 161–2, 187–9, 269.

[38] Against this, however, is the Republican argument that it took a Republican government – and the credibility of a threat from Eisenhower (as distinct from Truman) to expand the war – to secure a truce (but see Acheson's rejection of this view in Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953–71* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 16).

[39] Bueno de Mesquita, 'Exploration of the Democratic Peace' (fn. 3); Reiter and Stam, *Democracies At War* (fn. 3), pp. 151–63. But see Hilde Ravlo, Nils Petter Gleditsch and Han Dorussen, 'Colonial War and the Democratic Peace', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 73:4 (2003), pp. 520–48.

explaining the relationship between democracy and peace. I begin to address here the question of liberal state imperialism through introducing a more sophisticated norm-based analysis than the one they attack. First it is important to establish the legitimacy of imperialism within the liberal tradition and whether this has remained a constant or evolved over time. Second, one ought to establish the record of liberal political actors with regard to the imperial violence of liberal states in terms of willingness to use force, as compared to that of other actors within the state, again utilising the measure of force-thresholds.

Curiously, Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* use 'imperialism' to reject norm-based approaches but without actually considering what the 'norm' pertaining to imperialism actually was for liberals. In fact, nineteenth century liberalism was divided on the question of empire. Liberals such as Bentham, Cobden and Bright, and Hobson were anti-imperialist on a variety of grounds including its distortional effect on the political purposes and policy processes of the liberal state, that it incurred unnecessary administrative and financial burdens, and was a way of 'exporting the Social Question'. Imperialism was the classic source of the 'the tail wagging the dog', as traders, military officers and local officials such as Lytton, Gordon and Rhodes dragged the state into wanton and unnecessary adventures. However, liberals such as John Stuart Mill advocated a 'liberal imperialism' on condition that the imposed tutelage could be shown to be 'beneficial' to the subject populations, through for example the spread of Christianity or enlightened political institutions. For this group empire *was* the norm. Over time, however, tensions between these positions became increasingly acute, resulting in the growing sense of empire's illegitimacy as the colonised increasingly claimed for themselves the right of national self-determination that the European powers themselves espoused. As Mayall has noted, the 'Achilles heel' of liberal empire was not the relegation of Britain and France in the international power-political league, but the cognitive scheme and political values upon which liberalism was based.[40]

In an article of this length I can only broach the topic of liberalism, imperialism and the use of force, but a good place to start is with the British Prime Minister William Gladstone. Gladstone was a liberal imperialist but one sharing some of the anti-imperialism of Cobden and Bright. His Second Ministry (1880–85) followed his 'Midlothian Campaign' in which he explicitly attacked Conservative foreign policy under Disraeli and Salisbury on Radical liberal grounds. In imperial affairs he was able to extricate Britain early on from a difficult situation in Afghanistan and it was in this period that he began his turn to Home Rule for Ireland. His major 'foreign' imperial crises, however, were in the Transvaal, Egypt and the Sudan.

The Transvaal (1880–81). From the Opposition benches Gladstone had criticised the 1877 British reannexation of the Transvaal as putting Britain 'insanely' in the 'strange predicament of the free subjects of a Monarchy going to coerce the free subjects of a Republic'.[41] After returning to office, however, Gladstone was himself

[40] James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 46.

[41] Ronald Robinson and J. A. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 65.

initially drawn towards the notion of a South African confederation, provoking the Boers to rebellion at the end of 1880. This led Gladstone to revert to his earlier position of reversing the annexation, but failure to communicate this led in the interim to the defeat of British forces at Majuba Hill by a group of Boer burghers and farm hands. It is here that force-thresholds become evident, as following this defeat Gladstone pressed ahead first with suzerainty and then independence for the Boers. In stark contrast the Tories and Whigs demanded that the defeat be avenged before entering negotiations. The significance of the world's greatest imperial power bowing to a local military defeat has been described thus: 'if there was one thing more likely to anger the Victorian public than heavy expenditure on empire, it was the cession of any of the Queen's possessions, however, undesirable. Yet Gladstone's government had not only hauled down the flag in the Transvaal, they had left a rebellion unpunished and a humiliating defeat unavenged.'[42] In this case the norm of self-determination carried much more weight for liberals than it did for conservatives, who were motivated more by norms of 'honour' and the need for Britain to demonstrate the credibility of its power. The force-threshold differential clearly demonstrates the greater willingness of liberals to pursue peace, even at the apparent cost of national pride.

Egypt I. Egyptian nationalist sentiment directed against foreign influence and the possibility of colonisation had been intensifying in Egypt since the late 1870s. That Gladstone sanctioned the bombing of Alexandria in 1881 marks the collapse of a liberal policy towards Egypt; not that such a policy had been allowed to proceed. Gladstone had frequently advocated the principle of 'Egypt for the Egyptians', in keeping with his view that the most secure bonds of empire were fostered by trust and accommodation. In this vein Robinson and Gallagher note that 'from September 1881 to June 1882 Gladstone and Granville tried one compromise after another . . . [until] at last they were overtaken by events in Egypt and by a Whig revolt . . .'.[43] Besides the Whig influence, the French under Gambetta (whom Gladstone regarded as 'no true liberal',[44] exacerbated relations with the Egyptian nationalists and impeded the pursuit of a liberal policy. 'Time after time' the Liberal government tried to [come to terms with Urabi and the nationalists] on a basis of concessions to the Chamber of Notables, but the French objected to the slightest delegation of authority to the Egyptians'.[45] Contrast this policy of thwarted concession with the response of the Conservatives to Khedive Ismail's nationalist turn in 1879. Salisbury acted swiftly through the Powers to have the Sultan depose the Khedive Ismail and Disraeli, for one, was prepared for the eventuality of a military occupation.[46]

[42] Ibid. (fn. 41), p. 71; also Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1935), p. 89; E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Gladstone* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp. 204–6.

[43] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and Victorians* (fn. 41), pp. 94, 104; Marvin Swartz, *The Politics of British Foreign Policy in the Era of Gladstone and Disraeli* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 141–2; but Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (fn. 42), pp. 171–210; Feuchtwanger, *Gladstone* (fn. 42), pp. 213–14.

[44] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and Victorians* (fn. 41), p. 98; Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (fn. 42), p. 175.

[45] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and Victorians* (fn. 41), pp. 161–210.

[46] Swartz, *British Foreign Policy* (fn. 43), p. 130.

Indeed, according to Robinson and Gallagher's detailed account, whilst the Alexandria riots of June 1882 (in which 170 Egyptians and 50 Europeans were killed and the British Consul injured) swung many in the Cabinet behind the notion of intervention, Gladstone, Granville and Bright were holding out against such an option. However, two weeks after becoming aware of the construction of shore batteries capable of striking the British and French ships in the harbour, Gladstone's government (not following Bright's wish simply to move the ships out of range) bombarded the batteries and later that year destroyed Urabi's forces at Tel-el-Kebir, thereby beginning the occupation of Egypt. Salisbury, whilst not lending public support to the Liberals, admitted in a private letter to the leading Conservative Northcote that 'in the end they acted as we should have wished; & according to the traditions of English policy'.[47] The case reaffirms the contention that liberals have a higher force-threshold than those to the Right; but, that liberal restraints were insufficient to avert the use of force is discussed further below.

Sudan. The destruction of the Egyptian army raised, in turn, the risk that the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed, would extend his revolt against Egyptian rule from the Sudan into Egypt itself. In May 1883, the reforming Egyptian *Pashas* planned to press the advantage given by Hicks Pasha's victory over Mahdist forces; London counselled restraint but did not forbid the march. In November, however, news reached London that Hicks and his 10,000 troops had been annihilated. At this juncture Gladstone's Ministry overruled the Khedive and insisted upon a withdrawal from the Sudan, for so long as the Khedive squandered its resources in Sudan it could not hope to restore solvency and political order in Egypt. The popular anti-slavery hero General Gordon was sent to relieve the garrisons at Khartoum, but following a series of further Mahdist victories fear spread at home that Gordon himself might be in peril.

From March 1884 the Whigs in Cabinet strongly supported sending an expedition to rescue Gordon, but the Radicals suspected (correctly) that they were angling to conquer the Sudan. When on 1 August the Cabinet did agree to an expedition, its purpose was to 'rescue and retire'. However, news of Gordon's death in February 1885 shook the country and refocused calls for action. True to type, the Conservatives and Whigs called for the pacification and occupation of the Sudan, whilst Morley (carrying over 100 votes in the Commons) called for an immediate withdrawal. Gladstone's cabinet decided initially to send an expedition but to retire immediately after pacifying the Mahdi, prompting Goschen to accuse the Cabinet of going to Khartoum to please the Whigs and retiring from Khartoum to please the Radicals. As the issue faded and others came to the fore (notably Penjdeh), the Cabinet on 15 April ordered the full evacuation of the Sudan.[48]

None of the major political groupings professed a strong interest in the Sudan, but whenever the question of force arose one consistently finds the Conservatives and Whigs more belligerent than Gladstonians and Radicals. Indeed, the differences between liberals and Tories/Whigs reveals deeper conceptual differences regarding

[47] Ibid. (fn. 43), p. 144.
[48] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and Victorians* (fn. 41); Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (fn. 38), p. 211–48; Feuchtwanger, *Gladstone* (fn. 42), pp. 222–6.

their view of the bases of international order and their respective models of imperialism. At the time, Northcote lamented that under the Liberals, in the Transvaal, Egypt, Sudan and in Ireland 'we' showed 'want of power, want of grip, want of consistency'.[49] Firmness in policy was a prerequisite of maintaining order in the empire and of demonstrating the credibility of one's resolve to the other Powers. By contrast, Gladstonians aspired to maintain the Empire through bonds of political respect, cultural affinity and trade. Indeed, ultimately, Gladstonians 'saw no other way of binding the Irish, the Boers, and in the end, even the Egyptians[!] . . .'.[50] A liberal empire required a liberal *policy* towards empire, or else one risked undermining the 'civilisational' values of empire itself, militarising the home country and antagonising the Powers of Europe. Whilst Conservatives or Whigs might puff out their chests and extol the importance of the measured threat of force as a way of preventing war, and that any use of force be carefully calibrated to the national interest, in practice they were unable to shake off the jingo, beckoning them to avenge this or that affront to honour so as not to be a laughing stock in the courts of Europe or around the campfires beyond. Liberals want peace, indeed they may need it, yet have been unable to escape the politics of war, which is an art they struggle to understand, let alone master, even if they are sometimes tempted to practise it – in the name of peace.

Egypt II and the limits of a norms and thresholds approach. Threshold analysis seeks to identify margins of difference between liberals and other actors on the domestic political spectrum in order to gain an indication of liberal peace-proneness *relative to other actors*. When coupled with and evaluated in conjunction with the role of liberal norms in constraining and commissioning force, this method enables a fuller representation of the influence of liberalism upon war/peace proneness than do the existing methods within democratic peace scholarship. Empirically one finds that in the Transvaal the use of force was discontinued, in Egypt deferred, and in the Sudan deferred and minimised: all credibly the consequence of liberal peace-proneness.

Important also, however, is to recognise the limitations of this approach, particularly if the democratic peace is to develop as a 'critical' as well as an empirical research agenda. It is a method attuned to detect margins of difference between liberals and others in specific circumstances, but is not designed to analyse the political structures and processes through which those circumstances were themselves generated and reproduced and which may contribute to the 'pull' of war. Indeed, the Egyptian case exposes most clearly the limits of liberal peace-proneness as 'peaceful intentions' ultimately proved futile when faced with the underlying political dynamics of the imperial relationship itself. Now, it may be that had a liberal policy been allowed to proceed, the use of force could have been avoided. But independent of the complicated domestic and international politics of the case, which as Gladstone discovered made the politics of peace a high-risk and thankless strategy, were deep-rooted structural tensions arising from the dynamics of Anglo-Turkish-Egyptian relations and the way these influenced the process of Egyptian

[49] Andrew Lang, *Life, Letters, and Diaries of Sir Stafford Northcote First Earl of Iddesleigh* (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1891), p. 346.
[50] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and Victorians* (fn. 41), p. 160.

modernisation. The political authority of the Khedivate was increasingly undermined through collaboration with the British and French. By 1876 Egypt had been declared bankrupt and the country's finances placed under direct European control with the handsomely paid Europeans directing two-thirds of the revenue towards debt repayment. Economically, the country was increasingly integrated into the world economy as a cotton producer, which accounted for 76 per cent of Egypt's exports in 1880 and 93 per cent by 1912.

The focus on liberalism alone overlooks these important political and structural features of the Egyptian-British relationship that were fundamental to the rise of Egyptian nationalism.[51] The forcible integration of Egypt into the imperialist political and capitalist economic global political systems clearly influenced the development of domestic Egyptian politics and fostered resistance to Britain. Indeed, once one takes into account such historical-sociological insights one might reflect upon the case of Rawls' 'Kazanistan': what prospects, one wonders, for a 'decent hierarchical' regime to emerge from a legacy of bankruptcy, economic dependency on one primary commodity, and rule by people of different religion and colour?

The issue is important for acknowledging limits to the *depth* of analysis that a focus solely on correlations between regime type (or domestic political positions) and war/peace proneness can deliver. Clearly, forces besides political liberalism were determining the relationship between Britain and Egypt and these proved testing for liberal peace-proneness. Further research into the capacity of liberalism to affect not only the direct war-proneness of democracies, but also to critique those structures and practices with which it co-exists or even legitimates and that create the *conditions* that give rise to political tensions and military conflicts, should feature prominently in future analysis seeking to understand the relationship – and its limits – of liberalism and democracy to peace.

Conclusion

This article has sought to engage with and develop recent claims in Democratic Peace research that the relationship between democracy and peace is not confined to the inter-liberal realm, as maintained by the orthodox separate Democratic Peace position, but is manifest more broadly. The argument has been made – principally through analysing the philosophical bases and political agents of left-liberalism – that the perceived 'legitimacy' of the use of force is an important condition of liberal support. Legitimacy, in turn, has been operationalised in terms of liberal norms pertaining to the use of force, drawn in this instance from the work of John Rawls but which are found in the liberal tradition more broadly. That liberal norms may commission, as well as constrain, states in the use of force serves the necessary theoretical function of providing an axis through which to differentiate when liberals will and will not support the use of force, for it is clear that liberalism is not a universally pacific political doctrine or ideology.

[51] Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, 'The British Occupation of Egypt from 1882', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol III: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

At the same time, however, there are both theoretical and empirical grounds for supporting the view that liberalism may well exert a more general restraining influence upon the use of force by states, rooted in the residual tensions between liberal values and principles and war and preparation for war. Accordingly, the liberal disposition is one marked by both 'restraint' and 'reform' which, while initiating its own set of tensions including the potential for 'crusading' behaviour, would seem more accurately to reflect liberalism's legacy (at least in the series of reasonably neutral cases studied above) than does the strict inter-liberal/non-liberal demarcation of liberal peace-proneness that characterises the orthodox separate Democratic Peace position.

However, there are significant and necessary qualifications to this argument. Firstly, not only is liberal peace-proneness contingent upon the strength and influence of liberalism in politics, but the frequent combination of power and ethnocentrism may implicate liberalism itself in the perpetration of violence, for example through imperialism or crusades. Other influences that may prevail over liberalism to determine political outcomes include the prospect of tactical behaviour on the part of political actors, the influence of non- or less-liberal political actors, the influence of special interest groups in the policymaking process, strategic interaction factors at the international level, and the residual structural enmeshment of liberal politics in a range of problematic practices and systems such as capitalism, militarism and realist doctrines of national security.

But, insofar as seeking to maintain a critical distance towards liberalism and recognising the contingency of liberalism's influence upon foreign policy puts the 'politics' back into Democratic Peace research, then such qualifications may ultimately strengthen rather than weaken the peace-proneness of democratic states. At the academic level the deconstruction of the separate democratic peace and recognition of a more complex relationship between democracy and peace/conflict invites engagement with a range of analytical traditions including political philosophy, normative theory, post-colonial studies, foreign policy analysis, peace studies and historical sociology that are equipped to deliver a more critical appreciation of the relationship between liberalism, liberal states and peace/conflict than tends to be found in the primary Democratic Peace literature.

Hitherto, whilst Democratic Peace scholarship might be fairly criticised for being rather insular, other branches of social-scientific inquiry might be equally criticised for neglecting or dismissing the growing evidence of a genuine correlation between strands of democratic thought and practice in domestic politics and conflict aversion and conflict reduction in foreign affairs. Whilst much good work has been produced in this area, there is nevertheless still a superficiality of knowledge regarding the extent and depths, limitations and contradictions, potential and political implications of the democracy–peace connection. It deserves more. In this vein a greater multi-disciplinary engagement would likely deliver a more rounded understanding of the phenomenon and inject greater vigour into the debates.

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